

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



While Waiting for the Trolley by **Mike Bozart** (Agent 33) | SEP 2018

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by Mike Bozart

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At 7:38 AM on a still-very-much-scummer, [sic] already steamy, stagnant-air-mass Friday, the 7th of September (2018), I found my freckle-flecked-forearms, 54-year-old self at the first outbound Gold Line streetcar stop in uptown Charlotte (NC, USA). A returning faux-vintage trolley passed behind my back on East Trade Street. I rechecked the time on my cheapo LG cell phone as I stood on the concrete median, staring at three, fairly-old-for-this-raze-and-replace-burg, party-walled-together, two-and-three-story buildings. I became absorbed in my thoughts (once again). *That's an odd time for that trolley to be arriving. Did it do the whole run in just eight minutes? Usually it takes twelve to thirteen. Is it not running on the quarter-hour? Maybe it no longer runs on set times. Hope it leaves soon. Already late for work. Wonder who is already there. The boss? Wonder when those charming-for-this-neopolis, [sic] bygone-era buildings encounter Mr. Wrecking Ball. Could they possibly be spared? Build around and over them? Doubt it; that's not the Charlotte way. They sure would make for some cool apartments. Seem to have the same thoughts every time I glance at that trio. [of buildings]*

I then looked down at the black-painted metal railing. Tiny brown ants were feasting upon some spilled soda residue. And to the right of them, a line of scratched-in graffiti arrested my eye.

I'd be a genius if I weren't so dumb. - SMH

I chuckled to myself, hoping that the seven other people waiting for the tram didn't hear me. My mind ran with it. *That's good stuff. Never know what one might read on these*

railings. Should use this in the next short story. Did someone add 'SMH' after reading this line? Or, is it the graffiti-ist's initials? Shake my head. So outrageous.

Then a short, wiry, white guy of about my age with graying hair, wearing a white T-shirt with block-letter text – *Charlotte Basketball* – walked up. He had a green Philadelphia Eagles cap on. I thought about his blue-sleeve-ends shirt. *That's not a [Charlotte] Hornets garment. Nor is it of any Charlotte college or high school. Kind of a strange T-shirt. What the hell is 'Charlotte Basketball'? Some amateur league for the over-50 crowd? Damn, I'm now in that crowd, too. Just a grain of sand nearing the bottleneck in the big hourglass. Almost done it seems. And really didn't get much of anything accomplished. Just another airball. [a basketball shot that misses badly – hits nothing but air]*

He then asked me what time it was. I gladly told him and figured that would be it. But then he asked:

“How often does this trolley run?”

“That’s the million-dollar question,” I replied and then chuckled. “It used to run every fifteen minutes on weekdays. However, I have my doubts now, as that returning trolley came back at an odd time. Maybe it will roll out of its berth in five minutes.”

“Thanks. I’m not really that familiar with it. But, 7:45 will work for me. My job at PRN [Promise Resource Network] is about a mile from the CPCC [Central Piedmont Community College] stop. I can’t wait for it to be extended over Independence.” [Expressway – US 74]

“Yeah, that will be nice,” I agreed. “Though, I think that doesn’t happen until sometime in 2020.”

“I just wish that they would hurry up and reconstruct the Hawthorne [Lane] bridge,” he stated. “I would just like to be able to walk over it.”

“Yeah, me, too. I used to use it when I rode my bike to work.”

“What kind of bike?” he asked with genuine interest.

“Oh, it’s just a Walmart one-speed. I’ve customized it, though. Replaced just about everything but the frame.” I chuckled.

He grinned. “Well, why aren’t you on it today, man?”

“Too warm. If the morning low isn’t below 65°, [Fahrenheit; 18.3° Celsius] I don’t ride. I’ll just be too sweaty after the six miles. [9.6 km] It was 73° [Fahrenheit; 22.8° Celsius] when I walked out the door to catch my first bus.”

“What bus was that?” he asked, seeming quite curious to know.

“The 222 on the east side,” I informed.

“And which was your second bus?” he then asked.

“The 9,” I answered.

“If you were on an inbound 9 bus, why are you now here waiting for this outbound trolley?” *Has this red-haired guy lost his marbles?*

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